



Marines with Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment and Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa watch for shot impact as Marine Sgt. Taylor White sights in on the target hundreds of yards away here May 31. The Marines traveled to the range to cross train with a French commando sniper team to strengthen ties between the two militaries deployed to Djibouti and hone their long-range shooting skills.

Marine snipers spend Memorial Day honing skills

Story and photos by Cpl. Adam C. Schnell

ARTA, Djibouti – As the sounds from several sniper rifles echo off the mountainous Djiboutian landscape, Marines and soldiers supporting Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa familiarize themselves with French sniper weapons systems here May 31.

Many Americans around the world take May 31, Memorial Day, to remember service members fallen in the

line of duty. This was no different for these nine men – only they didn't go to ceremonies or parades; they trained in the hot African sun to help their brethren in future combat situations.

Marines with Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment and soldiers with the Bravo Company, 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment, "The Old Guard," shot weapons with French commandos deployed here at targets from distances up to 1000 yards.

Shooting weapons with the commandos not only gave the American service members a chance to handle different weapons systems but also to strengthen ties with French military forces in Djibouti.

"I really enjoyed cross-training with the French military out here, they were very professional and great to work with," said Lance Cpl. Jason Quinlan, a member of the Marine sniper team.

This was the second training exercise with the French snipers who are currently stationed in Brest, France. For many of the American service members this was the first time they received the opportunity to train with and learn about the features and capabilities of French sniper rifles.

"The language barrier wasn't a problem out here," said Quinlan. "A lot of the terms in the sniper world are the same around the world."

The weapons on hand included new and old sniper rifles from French and American rifle makers. The American M-40A3 and M-14 sniper rifles, along with many different French weapons ranging from a silenced .308

caliber rifle used by French policemen to the .50 caliber sniper rifle, are used to disable the mobility of many vehicles.

"They were using some pretty awesome weapons," said Quinlan. "There were a couple of the weapons I didn't even know existed."

For many of the Marines and soldiers participating in the training, the French sniper team brought weapons with them that the Americans had never seen much less fired before. This gave the Marines and soldiers a chance to use these weapons and test their capabilities.

"It was a great way for the Marines to learn more about the weapons capabilities of our coalition partners," said Marine 1st Lt. Adam B. Rickenbach, training exercise officer for CJTF-HOA and an Oelrichs, S.D., native. "It also helped strengthen the ties between the two military forces for future training opportunities."

While out at the range, the Marines and soldiers not only became familiar with French weapons but also honed their skills using their own. Ev-

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Marines and soldiers supporting Combined Joint Task-Horn of Africa look on as a French commando sniper fires a PGM Precision .50-caliber sniper rifle at a target more than 600 yards away here May 31.